

Finding Historical Primary Sources and Archives – Search Strategy Worksheet (6 steps)

Sample topic: *I need a range of primary sources relating to changes in working conditions in Australia since the 1970s.*

Step/Search Tip	For example topic	For my topic
<p>1. Read the background to your topic</p> <p>Check subject specific encyclopaedias for overviews</p> <p>Search library catalogues and databases for related secondary sources (books/journal articles)</p> <p>Browse tables of contents/indexes within books on the broader subject area. Check their bibliographies for mention of other sources</p> <p>Check yearbooks/timelines to see what was going on in local/Australian/world affairs at that time</p> <p>Use all the above to help establish names of relevant people/organisations, key dates, contemporary terminology and also to place events/issues in their historical context</p>	<p><i>Check Australian history encyclopaedias</i></p> <p><i>Search Catalogue for books. Try keywords like:</i> - <i>work* and (australia* or "new south wales")</i></p> <p><i>Search social sciences databases like APAFT for articles. Try more specific keywords like:</i> - <i>(work* or employ*) and condition* and (australia or "new south wales")</i></p> <p><i>Look for mention of specific people or organisations involved (ie. trade unions, employer groups)</i></p> <p><i>Check volumes from 1970s online or in hardcopy of:</i> - <i>ABS Australian & NSW Yearbooks</i> - <i>Australian Journal of Politics and History (June & Dec issues include 'Political Chronicles' summary of main events of that period)</i></p>	<p>Note: Use the separate <i>Search Strategy Keywords Worksheet (tips for history related topics)</i> to help you come up with useful search terms</p>
<p>2. Identify the scope of your research</p> <p>Compile a brief list of what types of records, what years, which regions etc. you are most interested in</p>	<p><i>What types of records? - contemporary newspaper articles, government reports, gov't/union media releases, transcripts of political debates & speeches, biographies of key individuals</i></p> <p><i>What time period? - c.1970s+</i></p> <p><i>Which region(s)? – Australia, NSW in particular</i></p>	
<p>3. Consider possible sources for records</p> <p>Who (which organisations or people) might have been involved in activities which produced relevant records at the time?</p> <p>Where might these records be kept now?</p>	<p><i>Who? – Federal Gov't, NSW Gov't, ACTU, SCLC</i></p> <p><i>Where? - Gov't, union organisations' web sites (for reports, media releases, transcripts), UOW Library (for hardcopy publications/reports)</i></p>	

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<p>4. Check for related primary sources/archives</p> <p>Use the quick links and search tips on the UOW Archives web site, especially the help guide for <i>Finding Historical Primary Sources</i></p> <p>For example:</p> <p>Search library catalogues for published copies of historical primary sources, as well as archives web sites for any digitised online collections</p> <p>Search for contemporary newspaper or magazine/journal articles written around the relevant period</p> <p>Check if anyone has compiled a list of primary sources as part of their bibliography or produced a guide to archival records on the subject area</p>	<p><i>Search UOW Library and Libraries Australia Catalogues. Try keywords like:</i></p> <p><i>- (work* or employ*) and (australia* or new south wales) and (document* or source* or record*)</i></p> <p><i>Search Sydney Morning Herald Digital Archive for fulltext articles from SMH newspaper pre 1990s</i></p> <p><i>Search Illawarra Index database for references to major articles from Illawarra Mercury 1940s+</i></p> <p><i>Look through bibliographies in back of books or end of chapters/articles for mention of related primary sources such as gov't reports. Check if copies online or held at UOW Library (search title details on Library Catalogue and also look in Parliamentary Papers series if needed)</i></p> <p><i>Search other library/archives catalogues (NSW State Library, National Library and National Archives in Canberra) for any mention of archival material they might hold</i></p>	<p>Refer back to your <i>Keywords Worksheet</i></p>
<p>5. Check ahead when visiting libraries/archives</p> <p>Save time by checking on access/usage conditions and how long it will take staff to retrieve the items you want</p>	<p><i>Check National Archives opening hours. Find out if need to make an appointment or tell them in advance which items I want; can I take photocopies or use a digital camera or will I need to bring a laptop and make notes?</i></p>	
<p>6. Use the help of library/archives staff</p> <p>Staff may have extensive knowledge of material held in particular collections</p>	<p><i>Discuss my search with UOW Archivist and Arts Faculty Librarian. See if they have further suggestions</i></p>	